



Soldiers

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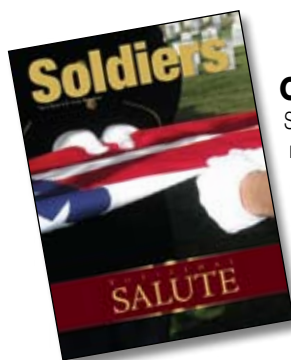
The Official U.S. Army Magazine

T H E • F I N A L
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Cover Image

Soldiers of the 3rd U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard) reverently fold the flag that had draped a fallen Soldier's casket before burial at Arlington National Cemetery.

— Photo by Spc. Nancy Van Der Weide

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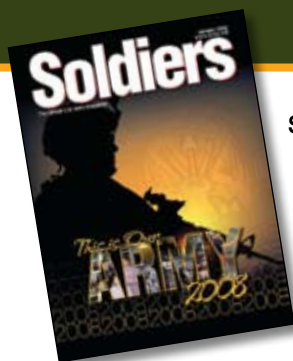
SOLDIERS MEDIA CENTER



We Want Your Story

The Army is our nation's greatest resource in defense of our homeland. Every day Soldiers and civilians perform acts of valor. The heroic acts performed on the battlefield and the acts of kindness from humanitarian efforts demonstrate the strength of the Army. We want to tell your story. To find out how the Soldiers Media Center can tell your story, contact your unit public affairs officer or send your submissions via e-mail to

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Visual Information Staff
Graphic Designer: Peggy Frierson
Graphic Designer: LeRoy Jewell

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MAILCALL

Letters from the Field

coverage of softball, since a lot of Soldiers play on post and local city teams. It's a fast and challenging sport, and one I think your readers would be interested in knowing more about.

Lt. Scott Simmons
via e-mail

YOU all did a wonderful job with the February sports issue — nice variety of sports, and some really great photos.

I do have one small complaint, however. I didn't see any mention of rugby, which is a tremendously popular sport both Stateside and downrange. I've played on post and community teams for my whole career, and looking for the local club is one of the first things I do when I land at a new post.

Other than that, it was a great issue.

Sgt. Jim Allen
via e-mail

THANKS for the feedback. While some of us here at Soldiers have scrummed once or twice, we have to admit that rugby did seem to get passed over. We apologize for the slight, and would be happy to hear from Soldiers who might belong to either Army-sponsored or community-based rugby teams — if we get enough feedback, we might be able to feature Soldier-rugby players in an upcoming issue.

Soldiers Values Your Opinion

To comment, keep your remarks to under 150 words, include your name, rank and address, and send them to:

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Thanks for taking time to recognize the people who keep the Army rolling along.

Master Sgt. James Wynn (Ret.)
via e-mail

Military Construction

I FOUND the March Soldiers to be very interesting, but I'm wondering if an entire issue devoted to military construction might be just a bit too much.

I realize that the Army is trying to improve quality of life with new barracks and shopping centers and such, but a whole bunch of stories about building things don't make for a very lively issue. I mean, what's next — a whole issue on military lawn care?

Name withheld by Request

GREAT March issue. I thought the focus on military construction was really interesting, especially since there seems to be a lot of building going on all over the Army.

It's good to know that the Army has adopted modern modular construction techniques, since it really helps get things put up faster. And I also enjoyed the focus on the rehab of Schofield Barracks — I was stationed there some years back, and the barracks were the one thing I didn't enjoy about living in Hawaii.

Anyway, great issue, and keep up the good work.

Maj. Alfred Cadag
via e-mail

Army Sports

YOU all produced a great sports issue in February. It's not often we get to see such extended coverage of the sports Soldiers engage in.

I would only suggest that next time you might want to include some

Cool Shot, Wrong Service

I REALLY enjoyed the Army Reserve focus of the April issue, since I feel the Reserve's contributions are often overlooked.

I feel I have to point out, though, that the two helicopters pictured in the box on the contents page are Marine Corps HH-53 Sea Stallions. Just wondered why we have pictures of Marine aircraft in an Army magazine.


Name withheld by request
via e-mail

THANKS for your letter. We ran the image of the Marine helicopters (which, by the way, are actually CH-53E Super Stallions) for two reasons. First, because the larger image used in the story beginning on page 12 shows the aircraft being guided to a landing by a Soldier, and, second, because the last time we checked the Army and the Marine Corps were sister services. And as we all know, it pays to be nice to your sisters.

Hooah for Mechanics

THE April article "Army Mechanics Go the Distance" was excellent. It's nice to see a piece that focuses on some of the most over-worked and under-appreciated folks in the Army.

Having spent a big chunk of my 20-some years in the Army as a wheeled-vehicle mechanic, I can tell you from experience that it takes a superhuman effort to keep the Army's vehicles moving. Long, long hours are the norm, even at Stateside posts, and when you add the hassles of being deployed, the work can turn into a 24-hour-a-day struggle.



The traditional flag-folding ceremony conducted at a military funeral is both a recognition of the fallen Soldier's service to the nation and a reverent acknowledgement of the family's loss.

F O R T H O S E

Left Behind

Story by Carrie McLeroy



In the shadow of the Pentagon, members of the 3rd U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard) render a gun salute for a fallen Soldier being buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

THE scene has played out in countless movies:

A mother and father are eating dinner when they hear a knock at the door. The father answers, separated from a lone Soldier by a screen door. The mother joins her husband at the door, the camera zooms in on the Soldier, and music drowns out what he says.

The mother throws herself into her husband's arms, and the Soldier's lips form the words, "I'm so sorry."

That is how the movies leave the family, alone and grieving. But that's only in the movies.

In reality, when a Soldier is killed in combat, an entirely different scenario transpires, according to Soldiers at the Casualty and Mortuary Affairs Operations Center. The process of notifying a family about the death of a loved one is one action in a series of events that begin before a casualty-notification officer makes the solemn walk to a family's front door.

When a Soldier is killed in-theater, members of the CMAOC receive a preliminary message, said Lt. Col. Bob Amico, chief of training and media de-

velopment. "We get a 'heads-up' message from in-theater regarding deaths. While the command in-theater is verifying every detail of the death, the CMAOC assigns a case manager, who notifies the Casualty Assistance Center closest to the family."

The Army has 27 CACs in the continental United States, and six overseas. The CACs are responsible for the administrative functions of casualty operations and mortuary affairs, said Lt. Col. Brenda Hughey, CMAOC's Case Management Branch operations officer. They are usually operated on military installations, and assign and train casualty-notification and casualty-assistance officers.

Once the CMAOC receives the official initial report of a Soldier's death from the Theater Casualty Area Command in Kuwait, it is forwarded to the local CAC. A CNO and a CAO are assigned, said Sgt. 1st Class Norman Campbell, NCOIC of the CMAOC's Notification Cell. Barring extenuating circumstances, the family must be notified within four hours of the time the CMAOC receives the initial casualty report.

A two-person team always delivers the news no one wants to deliver to a parent, husband or wife, said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Ormsbee of the Case Management Branch. The duty carries with it the unimaginable burden of being the person who must explain to the family that their loved one is not coming home alive.

"In most cases a chaplain will be one of the two people to visit the family," he added. The chaplain is there to support both the family and the CNO. If a chaplain is not available, another Soldier — a staff sergeant or above — will be the second member.

"We used to only assign one CNO and one CAO to the primary next of kin," Amico said. "For example, if a Soldier was married, there would be a CAO for the husband or wife. We now also provide a CNO and a CAO to the parents."

"Throughout the process, the CAOs will communicate with one another to ensure both parties are represented," he said. The CAOs work together in those situations to coordinate travel, lodging and other logistics so the family members have less to consider.

Before being appointed, a CNO or CAO must undergo comprehensive training, said Amico, who added that the program has been refined in recent years.

"The key piece of training that was missing in the past was the emotional aspect of this duty," Amico said. As a result, the military has developed emotionally based scenarios designed so CNOs and CAOs get an idea of what to expect during the notification and assistance processes. The training was developed based on interviews with notification and assistance officers, as well as almost 100 survivors.

Armed with their input, Amico said, scripts were developed and professional actors were hired to make the training scenarios as realistic as possible. Documentary pieces with CNOs, CAOs and, most importantly, survivors, are also incorporated into the training. In addition to various training scenarios, there is also a grief-and-bereavement module that walks notification and assistance officers through the emotional steps of their duties.

The CACs are responsible for ensuring all CNOs and CAOs participate in the training, which is generally done via an online course, Amico said. Course completion can be tracked by both the CACs and the CMAOC. Amico added that the CMAOC does provide on-site training to various National Guard, Reserve and active-duty CACs.

"We have five, two-member mobile training teams available at the request of the CACs. We've trained about 4,000 CNOs and CAOs over the last year in this type of classroom environment," Amico said.

Notification and assistance officers are directed to provide only the facts acquired through official reports. They don't speculate or reveal unauthorized information.

"Our CNOs and CAOs try to give families the fullest possible initial account, based on the information received," Amico said. An investigation is always performed, even for hostile deaths. As soon as information is received through official channels, the family is updated.

Once the CNO has notified the family of their loved one's death, the CAO becomes their major source of information and, many times, of comfort, Amico said. The notification and assistance officers are never the same individual, added Ormsbee, who noted that families are often initially angry with a CNO for delivering the news of their loved one's death.

"Survivors will sometimes comment about how awful they were to their CNOs, and how they wish they hadn't been, but it is completely understandable," he added. A different Soldier serves as the assistance officer, so the family will feel more at ease.

Before the first visit, the CAO is debriefed by the chaplain and CNO who conducted the notification, Hughey said. They can communicate to the CAO the family's state of mind. The assistance officer then obtains a copy of the notification officer's Record of Casualty Notification Actions, and reviews as much as possible about the circumstances surrounding the Soldier's death.

The CAO also verifies with the CAC the status of the Soldier's remains, Ormsbee said, because that is usually one of the first questions a family asks.

"The family wants to know when the Soldier is coming home, and when they can see him," he said. While information regarding the remains is minimal early in the process, the CAO relays to the family those facts that are known.

Once the CAO receives the casualty report, the CAC provides the identifications of the primary and secondary next of kin; the death gratuity recipient; the Servicemember's Group Life Insurance beneficiary; the person authorized to direct disposition of the Soldier's remains; and the person eligible to receive effects. These individuals may be the same person, or several different people. The CAO is also required to maintain a daily staff journal/duty officer's log form throughout the process, as well as complete a CAO after-action report.

A CAO must contact the next of kin within four hours of the notification, Hughey said. The assistance

"We're here to take care of the fallen Soldiers and their families. If they need more time, we give them more time," Amico said.

officer makes the initial contact by telephone, to introduce himself, express condolences and schedule the first visit. The CAO tactfully explains to the family members that he will assist them with matters requiring their personal attention and decisions. During the call, the assistance officer will also determine if the family is experiencing any immediate financial or medical needs that must be addressed, and arrange a time and day for the first visit.

During the initial visit the CAO gets to know the family, gathering as much information as the family is willing and able to give, Hughey said. The information includes an address where the family will be for at least 45 days; the next-of-kin's Social Security numbers and the correct spellings of their names; and confirmation of family listed on the Soldier's Record of Emergency Data form. Information needed to issue the death-gratuity payment — which is intended to assist the family until long-term benefits commence — is also acquired. The CAO will encourage the family to begin gathering documents that will be needed to receive benefits.

The disposition of remains and other important issues are usually discussed on subsequent visits, Hughey said.

Because families are often too distraught to provide any information during the first visit, the entire casualty- and mortuary-affairs process moves at the family's pace.

"We're here to take care of the fallen Soldiers and their families. If they need more time, we give them more time," Amico said. CAOs often meet with families on multiple occasions solely to complete paperwork. There are generally many additional visits pertaining to more personal matters.

While the CAO works to meet the family's needs, their loved one is returning home. The Soldier's remains are recovered from the incident site and transported to the port mortuary at Dover Air Force Base, Del. The trip, via strategic airlift, usually takes about two days.

There is a reception for every fallen Soldier arriving at Dover, Amico said, with a general officer and honor team from the 3rd U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard) present.

"Every step of the way, everyone involved exhibits great reverence and respect for each fallen Soldier," he added.

At Dover, the armed forces medical examiner performs an autopsy to determine the cause and manner of death, and recommends whether the family should view the remains. A Federal Bureau of Investigation team and odontologist are also available to make forensic identifications.

The CAC or CMAOC forwards the autopsy and identification information to the CAO, Hughey said. The assistance officer then meets with the person authorized to direct disposition of the remains. After disposition instructions are received at Dover, the Soldier is prepared for his final trip home. The team at Dover performs mortuary services, including preparing the remains and placing them in a casket.

Fallen Soldiers are entitled to an escort from Dover to a predetermined location. The family can request, through their CAO, a special escort to accompany their loved one, but the Army also provides a military escort.

"The Defense Department has become more liberal with special escorts," Ormsbee said. "Families have even requested that Soldiers from in-theater escort the loved one's remains, and we do everything we can to accommodate those requests."

Families can also opt to have their loved ones flown home via military contracted air transport. In the past, the deceased were brought home on commercial transports to large, metropolitan airports.

Staci-Jill Sands



Casket Team members reverently lift the nation's colors from a Soldier's casket to start the ceremonial flag-folding.

"Sometimes families would have to travel great distances to meet their loved ones. Now we're able to get the remains closer to home, in some of the smaller airports, which is more convenient for the families," Ormsbee said.

Dover AFB makes the flight arrangements, and the escort team travels with the Soldier all the way to the receiving funeral home.

"Our Soldiers are never left alone," Amico said. The aircraft is met by the family, an honors team, the CAO and the hearse that will take the Soldier

to the funeral home. The honors team conducts planeside honors when the Soldier arrives.

The CAO escorts the hearse to the receiving funeral home. The CAO, escort and funeral home director view the remains to ensure that everything is as the family has requested. The CAO also inspects the Soldier's uniform to make sure everything is properly arranged and all awards are present.

Families often ask their CAO to stay with them during the sobering moment they first view their loved one.



Spc. Nancy Van Der Weide

Six horses and members of the Caisson Platoon draw a flag-draped casket on a black artillery caisson through Arlington National Cemetery.

Ormsbee, who has been on seven escort missions, has seen and experienced some of what everyone involved goes through. “There are so many human emotions involved in all of this, and you can’t just set them to the side. No one can.”

The CAOs are with the families throughout the mortuary, funeral and memorial experiences, CMAOC officials said. They are responsible for coordinating with everyone involved, and keeping the family aware of choices they have and decisions they must make regarding their Soldier.

The Soldier is entitled to several different burial, cremation and memorial options, and CAOs must navigate through this difficult subject with sensitivity, Hughey said.

The interment site is not always close to where family members reside, Hughey said. Travel reimbursement for per diem and roundtrip airfare to the location is authorized for the spouse, minor children, parents, in-laws and stepparents of the Soldier.

Assistance officers play a large, behind-the-scenes role in the funeral or memorial service. They are responsible for coordinating the military funeral honors, flag presentations and general officer or military presence. The Army chief of staff directs general-officer attendance at the services of all active-duty Soldiers who die while participating

in ongoing operations, CMAOC officials said. These are civilian ceremonies in which the Army is an invited guest, so a CAO will defer to the family’s wishes regarding a military presence, Amico said. If the family chooses not to have a general officer attend, the CAO represents the Army.

During the funeral, the Soldier’s family is presented with any posthumous awards and promotion orders. If the Soldier was killed in an ongoing operation and was not a U.S. citizen, the family can request that the deceased be granted posthumous citizenship.

Full military honors are given during the service, including folding and presentation of the flag, Amico said. By law, flags are presented to the Soldier’s spouse and parents.

The CAO schedules a visit to the family two days after the funeral or memorial service. This visit is the beginning of the involved benefit-application process, CMAOC officials said. The assistance officer will facilitate a wide range of assistance, including reimbursement of funeral expenses; application for benefits and entitlements; requesting official reports and the results of investigations; and coordinating the return of the Soldier’s personal effects.

The CAO conducts as many follow-up visits as necessary, until all applications and reports have been submitted. The process usually takes several

months. Hughey said the assistance officer is also available to the family at any time throughout the administrative procedures as a source of moral support and comfort.

“The families usually don’t need the CAO beyond six months,” Amico added. “But some CAOs have maintained relationships with families far beyond that.”

The case manager at the CMAOC performs a six-month follow up with the family, conducting surveys about their experience and identifying any issues or problems that still exist, Hughey said.

There is also a Long-Term Family Case-Management Branch at CMAOC, whose manager provides families with support beyond the six-month follow up. “This office stays in contact with the family and provides further assistance if it’s needed,” Amico said.

Although nothing can bring back a fallen Soldier, all facets of the Army’s casualty and mortuary-affairs program work together to support families who have suffered the ultimate loss, Ormsbee said.

“These Soldiers take care of fallen comrades and their families with the thought that, in the event of their own deaths, they’d want someone to take care of them and their families in the best possible way,” he said. **sm**

Legacy of a Fallen Soldier

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. David Hopkins

ALL Soldiers, especially those who are deploying, want to know that if anything happens to them their families will be taken care of.

One Soldier went beyond caring for his family when he left \$20,000 of his life insurance to members of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team's rear detachment.

Staff Sgt. Michael Gabel, of the 173rd's Company D, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry, died of wounds he received in combat in Afghanistan in December.

"It isn't a surprise that he donated the money to the rear detachment, because of the kind of person he was," 1st Sgt. Richard Howell, 173rd South rear detachment first sergeant, said of Gabel. "But it is surprising that he snuck it past us and went through with putting it in his will."

The donation originated as a way to help pay for flowers for memorial services, but is turning into a way to take care of injured Soldiers.

"When the brigade first started getting casualties we were unable to get the government to pay for flowers for the memorial ceremonies," said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Arroyo, S-3 NCOIC. "We had to pass a hat to get the money, but before Staff Sgt. Gabel deployed he came to me and mentioned that he wanted to do something so the rear detachment wouldn't have to pay anymore."

After Gabel's death the rear detachment discovered the government would pay for the flowers. The money Gabel donated will now go for a different cause, but the rear-detachment leaders are still working out the details.

"We want to make it so wounded Soldiers get some comforts when they are recovering from their injuries," Arroyo said. "We're working something out so the interest from the money goes toward helping Soldiers without depleting the original donation amount."

It may have been a surprise that Gabel actually went through with the

donation, but his desire to help others was no surprise.

"One of the biggest things Gabel ever gave people was his time," Howell said. "He put a lot of time and research into helping people solve their problems. Whenever the brigade had a loss, Gabel did all he could to help. He helped organize things here on post, but he also made sure families were taken care of by donating his time to mow lawns and help with other household chores."

"He'll be remembered as being a great person, noble and righteous. From small things to big, he took care of people," Arroyo said. **sm**



Staff Sgt. Michael Gabel (center) of Company D, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry, led some 30 Soldiers on a hike through the Polish countryside during an exercise held just months before his death.



Gabel, seen here talking with a local woman during the Polish exercise, left \$20,000 of his life insurance to members of his unit's rear detachment. He was killed in Afghanistan in December 2007.

Staff Sgt. David Hopkins works in the SETAF Public Affairs Office.



A Soldier's burial is not the end of the Army's assistance to the family. Casualty-assistance officers often attend the funerals, and are available to the families throughout the often months-long administrative procedures that follow the burial.

have met the Soldier who died, the fact that he wore a uniform, and so do you, means you're family."

Notification duty officially begins when a Soldier receives a prepared statement and is told to inform someone's parents that their son or daughter has been killed in the line of duty. Sanders got the job when his name came up on a roster.

On his way to the parent's home, he wondered if there was any way to soften the words that would surely be the most devastating these people had ever heard. He began practicing his statement aloud and altered the tone several times, knowing there was no right or wrong way. Nothing was going to change what had happened.

Sanders also contemplated rumor-mill stories that had circulated about other notifications; one family grabbed the notification officer and cried, while another refused to allow the notification officer into their home for several hours.

One father claimed the notification officer was at the wrong address, refusing to believe the casualty was his son.

"Many notifications have been made late at night, as mine was," Sanders said. The Army's concern is that someone other than an Army representative might deliver the news unprofessionally and without accurate information.

The closer Sanders came to the Soldier's home, the more he prayed that no matter how the family reacted, he'd act professionally.

Finding the right house was difficult. And after much futile pounding, a neighbor suggested Sanders try knocking on the back door, since the family entered and exited from there.

As he approached the entrance, Sanders' stomach seemed to fall to his feet, and his whole insides ached. Then the door opened.

Concentrating on the words he was going to say was difficult, he said, as a middle-aged couple looked at him,

FOR THE Families

Story by Renita Foster

CASUALTY-notification duty is something all Soldiers dread but none neglect to perform with honor, because it's the last thing one Soldier can do for another at a time when the fallen Soldier's survivors need compassion, straight answers

and strength more than ever, said Maj. Scott Sanders, an Army officer who recently performed a casualty-notification mission for a 101st Airborne Division Soldier whose family lives near Fort Monmouth, N.J.

As a notification officer, "you'll be judged not only by your military peers, but by the deceased Soldier's loved ones. And although you may never

Renita Foster is the Communication and Electronics Research and Development Command public affairs officer at Fort Monmouth, N.J.

taken aback by his presence, especially at such a late hour.

Mustering as much courage as he could, Sanders read his prepared statement, as his hands trembled. Etched in his memory forever was a father who simply stared at him, too shocked to do anything else, while the mother pounded the table with her fists in anger.

On this night, there were two casualty notifications because two Soldiers whose families were from the same area had been killed. Because the CNO and CAO — the Soldiers who notifies the family of a death and the Soldier who helps the family following the death notification — cannot be the same person, Sanders had to switch jobs with the Soldier who made the other notification.

That meant Sanders had to face a second family the next day. Knowing what was coming, and the vision of the two distraught parents he just left, made any sleep that night impossible.

The next morning came quickly. As CAO, he commanded himself to be professional when approaching the Soldier's family. He called ahead so they would expect him. But it had been less than 24 hours since the parents learned their son had been killed in Iraq by an improvised explosive device. And there was no way to tell how they were dealing with the reality.

His first visit with the new family centered mostly on helping them complete necessary paper work; he needed their signatures and Social Security numbers on various forms.

Watching their pain, Sanders struggled to keep his composure. The hardest part was reviewing death-gratuity payments. That's when the dead Soldier's parents broke down, no doubt wondering how anyone could measure their son's life at any price.

Sanders sensed that while all those forms explained "who, what, when and how," what was missing was the "why." Why their son? It was a million-dollar question that he would never be able to answer.

Following Sanders' explanation about how the Soldier died and the requisite form-signing requirements,

the parents asked the inevitable question: "When will our son come home?" Sanders didn't have an answer. All he could do was assure them they would be notified the minute the body arrived at the predetermined destination.

Sanders said waiting for that call was nothing short of torturous.

Once the Soldier's body was returned to the family, there was no denying what had happened. Sanders knew that — depending on the circumstances of death — some families had the chance to see and touch their child one last time. They also received the Soldier's personal effects.

Other families had no one to hug and kiss goodbye. No clothing, no letters from home the Soldier might have kept in a special pocket until the next one came, no personal pictures, no Bible that was given before departure, nothing.

Sanders had come to dread leaving the family after each visit because of the tears he automatically shed afterwards. Serving as a CAO had made him realize he wasn't the hardcore Soldier he thought he was.

But Sanders always checked the sorrow by the time he arrived home. He knew that was a must to keep his family from seeing him that way. He knew they, too, had been affected by his latest mission. It reminded them how fragile life really was and how dangerous soldiering can be. If they saw him upset, doubts would surface about why he was in this job in the first place.

Sanders simply pulled himself together and acted like it had been "just another day at the office." But he also hugged his wife a little tighter and indulged his daughter by reading her an extra story at bed time. On a few occasions when sleep refused to come, he rose in the night and watched the peaceful faces sleeping.

During the visitation and funeral, Sanders and his assistants stood rigidly at attention or parade rest while watching the visibly shaken family and other mourners. He found himself wanting to cry with them.

"Standing alongside the other Soldiers who were part of the honor-guard



Casualty-notification duty is something all Soldiers dread but none neglect to perform with honor and compassion.

detail and pall bearers was somewhat comforting," said Sanders. "With them, I felt a sense of pride. It was obvious they'd spent a great many hours on caring for their uniforms, to ensure they were meticulous, as were their polished drill-and-ceremony skills. It all translated into a dedicated brotherhood. That's how Soldiers honor their own."

There was a great deal of saluting, but it's the long, drawn-out one at the final resting place that made Sanders understand the last goodbye was here.

As Sanders' hand came up for that slow, extended salute reserved for fallen Soldiers, he realized how well he had come to know him through his family and friends and through the stories and pictures they had shared. It was in that sanctified moment Sanders relived the slain Soldier's life and realized how much they had in common.

Like Sanders, he had loved his country and believed in its values. They had both sought to accomplish challenges that afforded self worth and confidence and instilled the desire to reach even higher goals. Best of all was the bonding with other Soldiers along the way that made them all closer than family. **sm**



Parents OF THE FALLEN

Story by Elizabeth M. Lorge

is one reason we feel like we failed him. Jeffrey was very strong-willed. He had a mission. Jeffrey believed it was something he had to do. We didn't really say very much. I remember once, my husband said, 'Well, what if he stays at Fort Knox and gets in a horrible car wreck?' You don't know what to do."

She added that she never really believed they could lose another son, but only seven months later, in February 2004, an IED claimed Jeffrey. He had just enough time to warn his unit and save other lives.

"I can remember so clearly that morning," she said. "I'd gotten up about 5 a.m., only to learn on the Internet that two Soldiers had been killed. I asked Mark if we would know by now if it was Jeffrey or not. Deep in my spirit, I had a feeling it was him, but the rational side of my brain could not even begin to think that it could be our son. It could just not be true. Not again."

Tainsh and her husband, David, a retired Marine sergeant major, lost his son and her stepson, Sgt. Patrick Tainsh, in Iraq that February as well. Severely wounded when his convoy was ambushed outside Baghdad Airport, he fired more than 400 rounds from two weapons to protect his comrades. When the battle ended, he died in his commander's arms. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart. Tainsh told her stepson's story in "Heart of a Hawk: One Family's Sacrifice and Journey Toward Healing."

FOR every Soldier killed by a sniper or an improvised explosive device, there are other, forgotten victims. Friends and family members of the dead are left to pick up the pieces and find some way to go on living.

But how do parents survive the loss of a child? How do they get out of bed each morning? How do they smile or laugh again?

It's almost impossible, said Carol Graham and Deborah Tainsh, two military wives and mothers whose sons were killed in Iraq. The pain is indescribable, they said.

"That knock on the door before the sun even rises, that's something that never leaves your mind," Tainsh said. "A certain part of you is dead from that day forward. Whereas most young spouses will move on, parents don't. We're stuck. All we do is search for a way to give our lives meaning in order to wake up every day.

"You get up every day saying, 'My son was a hero, he served this nation and this world in an honorable manner.' I will take that forward to let others know that he represents service to others, and his legacy will go on."

The only way to survive, the women agreed, is to find a new purpose in life. For both Tainsh and Graham, that purpose has become keeping their sons' memories alive. Both families have set up memorial projects and work to comfort other grieving families.

"It does keep us going," said Graham. She and her husband, Maj. Gen. Mark Graham, commander of Fort Carson, Colo., have lost two sons. Kevin, their younger son and a Reserve Officer Training Corps cadet, committed suicide in 2003. Just days after his funeral, his older brother, Jeffrey, already a second lieutenant, decided he couldn't take the stateside assignment he'd been offered and deployed to Iraq as scheduled.

"I was so numb," Graham said. "Kevin looked to us for guidance, which

Elizabeth M. Lorge writes for the Army News Service in Arlington, Va.

"You send your children out the door every day and you just take for granted that they're coming back, even when you send them off to war," she said. "It is a tremendous weight on the soul when parents send their children off to war. Your child is out there protecting you when that's what you're supposed to be doing for him."

After the funeral, she said, everyone else went back to their lives, but she and her husband could only go back to an empty, quiet house, completely shattered. Tainsh said they have lost the future: they'll never plan their son's wedding or have grandchildren. No one will carry on their name. They've also lost his fiancée, who was once like a daughter to them. They don't even put up a Christmas tree anymore.

Mrs. Graham added that while their friends' children graduated, married and had children, they wondered how the world could keep spinning without their sons. They cried in church when the prayers of others were answered.

Mrs. Tainsh said the worst question she and her husband are asked is if they have other children. She has a son from her first marriage, but she doesn't understand why this matters. She said another grieving mother tells others: "Think of a car. The car runs great with four good tires, but if one tire blows, it's absolutely useless."

At the same time, both she and Graham describe receiving overwhelming love and support from family, friends and their military family. Hearing from their children's comrades is especially important, Tainsh said.

"If you knew our children and you have a story, please bring it to us," she begged. "You've given us the greatest gift we could ever ask for. Don't be afraid. Just be strong enough to stand with us and shed tears with us, as you would stand to protect their backs and train them."

It's also important for survivors to hear about the great strides that have

been made in Iraq. Tainsh received an email from Patrick's Iraqi interpreter, thanking her and her husband for their sacrifice and thanking all Americans for helping rebuild his country. Both women spoke of the immense sacrifices the Iraqi people have made alongside American servicemembers.

"That helps too, knowing what our sacrifice was for, knowing that our Soldiers are coming back and saying we're really making a difference," said Graham. "The Iraqi people want what we want. They want their kids to be able to go to school. They want to be able to walk down the street and lead normal lives. I'll never believe that it was in vain."

In turn, both the Grahams and Tainshes have tried to help other grieving families. It's become their mission.

After Jeffrey's funeral, the Grahams struggled with whether Mark should retire, but realized they were in a unique position to help other families.

"More Soldiers died in Iraq, others died in car accidents or by suicide," Mrs. Graham said. "And it occurred to us that maybe this was the reason we were called to continue to serve. We personally knew the pain these families were feeling and we could genuinely connect in a way we never could have before. As we tried to comfort their broken hearts, an amazing phenomenon occurred — these precious people helped us more than we helped them."

"Most of the time we just hug them and cry with them," she said. "Usually someone has told them that we're living the same nightmare they are. But there aren't any words. It's just being there with them, trying to help take some of their grief. I love to sit with them and to hear stories, to say 'Tell us about your husband, tell us about your son.' That's what we try to focus on, not the few minutes that our boys died, but all the minutes, days, years that they lived."

Tainsh said she and her husband were lost for more than a year un-

"We remind ourselves continually that they were gifts. We did nothing to deserve them and so our attitude must always be one of gratitude that we had them at all."

til they found Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, a nonprofit organization that connected them with other grieving parents. Both Deborah and her husband trained to become mentors through TAPS, and proceeds from her book go to the organization, which she calls their "saving grace."

"TAPS was the blessing that gave Dave and me what we needed and finally placed our lives on a track with a definite purpose," she said. "We connected with parents and other family members and found our new family, where we bonded through our grief. The connection validates the fact that we were not the only ones dealing with horrific pain."

"Four or five years ago if someone had told us we could survive the death of even one of our children, I would not have believed it," said Mrs. Graham. "Many mornings I wake up thinking this is all a bad dream, but we were so blessed and so honored to have had such amazing sons. We remind ourselves continually that they were gifts. We did nothing to deserve them and so our attitude must always be one of gratitude that we had them at all."

"It doesn't take away the pain, but it gives us the strength and courage to keep on living," she added. "We've learned that the more grateful our hearts are, the more we're filled with compassion for the needs of others. We're grateful to live in the best nation on this planet and be part of a wonderful Army family." **sm**



THE LADIES OF ARLINGTON

Story and Photos by C. Todd Lopez

Escorted by members of the The Old Guard, Arlington Ladies attend the burial of every servicemember interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

als. When he told wife, Gladys, of his concerns, she mobilized members of the Officers Wives Club to begin attending funerals.

In 1973 Julia Abrams, the wife of Army Chief of Staff Gen. Creighton Abrams Jr., became concerned about Soldiers being buried at Arlington Cemetery without family or friends present and established the Arlington Ladies.

Today, the Air Force, the Army and the Navy all have Arlington Ladies who perform similar duties at the cemetery for members of their respective services.

Many times it's the older Soldiers, the ones who served in Korea and World War II, who have no one to attend their funerals.

Nancy Graves, an Arlington Lady since 1978, said she has attended several funerals where there are no family members or friends present at a Soldier's burial.

Besides honoring the Soldiers who are buried at Arlington, the ladies also extend to grieving family members the sympathy of the Army chief of staff and the entire Army family, said Margaret Mensch, Arlington Ladies chairwoman.

"We've been accused of being professional mourners, but that isn't true," she said. "I fight that perception all the time. What we're doing is paying homage to Soldiers who have given their lives for our country."

Each month Mensch creates a schedule, assigning two volunteers for each day a burial will be performed. The volunteers learn the day before how many funerals they will attend and who will be interred, either in the ground or in the cemetery's columbarium.

Arlington National Cemetery holds as many as 100 funerals a week, Monday through Friday. That's about 20 funerals a day. In recent years, that number has risen even higher. About half of the funerals are for Soldiers, and they are split between the two Arlington Ladies on duty each day.

Graves has lost count of the number of funerals she's attended over the past

DURING a recent Army funeral at Arlington National Cemetery, a woman escorted by a member of the Army's 3rd U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard), stood silently near the gravesite.

Not related to the Soldier being interred that day, she is one of about 65 women, known as the Arlington Ladies, who volunteer to attend Army funerals held at the nation's most hallowed cemetery. So every time a Soldier is buried there, an Arlington Lady is present.

They attend funerals in the heat, in the snow and in the rain. They are present for the burial of the youngest

Soldier who was killed during his first tour in Iraq and for the World War II-era Soldier who spent his last years in the Old Soldiers Home in Washington, D.C.

The Arlington Ladies stand a silent vigil at funerals attended by dozens of mourners and at funerals where a Soldier has no next of kin — no friends present to render a final salute. In fact, that is the very reason they attend funerals.

Since 1973, the Arlington Ladies have ensured that no Soldier — old or young — is ever buried alone.

The idea for the Arlington Ladies came about when Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg noticed no friends or relatives were on hand for some Air Force funer-

C. Todd Lopez works for the Army News Service in Arlington, Va.



After the folded flag is presented to the fallen Soldier's family, the Arlington Lady steps forward to offer words of condolence.

30 years, she said. Today, eight to 10 Soldiers are interred daily. "So we each attend five funerals a day, on average," she said.

When the Arlington Ladies began attending funerals some 35 years ago, they attended alone. But later they felt, as did the Army, that they needed to be made a more official part of the ceremony. So today Arlington Ladies attend the funerals with a military escort from the Army's Old Guard.

Pfc. Lyle Eagle is a member of the Old Guard and often escorts the Arlington Ladies. He also is a scheduler for other escorts. Soldiers who perform escort duty respect the Arlington Ladies, but are usually cautious at first, he said. That's because some of them are the wives of high-ranking officers and, as military partners, have witnessed decades of military history.

After working with the ladies for a while, the escorts are able to relax a bit and talk more informally, Lyle said. It is then that they learn about some of the Army history the ladies are privy to.

"For some funerals you have a few moments in the vehicle to talk to the ladies. They tell stories about their husbands' exploits, how the Army used to be and how it has changed over the years," Lyle said.

The Army escort and the Arlington lady meet before each funeral at the cemetery's administration building and

travel together, often with the military chaplain who will perform services, to a Soldier's gravesite.

They wait together near the burial site for the Soldier's casket to arrive, and then walk together to the burial site. There they wait silently, she holding his arm until the moment when the folded flag is presented to the deceased Soldier's next of kin. It is at that moment the Arlington lady steps forward and breaks her silence.

She approaches the widow, widower or grieving mother and father, and offers words of condolence. Then she presents the loved one a card from the Army chief of staff and his wife and a card from the Arlington Ladies.

Arlington Ladies may also have words of their own for the family members with whom they interact. Barbara Benson has been volunteering with the Arlington Ladies for 33 years and is the longest-serving Arlington Lady. She feels a special connection with older military wives who have lost their husbands and often asks them about their relationships, she said.

"I always try to add something personal, especially for a much older woman," she said. "I always ask how long they were married. They like to tell you they were married 50 or 60 years."

Benson was a former Soldier herself, serving as a flight nurse after World War II. Her own husband, Col.

George Benson (Ret.), died in December. Another Arlington Lady, a friend, comforted her at the funeral.

Following the Arlington Lady's portion of the ceremony, she steps back to her escort and remains silent for the remainder of the ceremony — she looks straight ahead and always maintains her dignity. While her portion of the ceremony is small, it is meaningful — for she represents to family members the entire Army family.

Chaplain (Maj.) David Baum said presiding over funerals at Arlington is an honor and each respective funeral helps loved ones grieve.

"The ceremony is a beautiful event to help families honor their loved ones," he said. "I think it reminds them that the Soldier who died was part of something very important: service to his nation," Baum said.

Because the Arlington Ladies are all former or current military spouses, "they help to put a family face on the ceremony," he added. "They remind us that military service is often a family experience. Their presence brings home the fact that the entire Army family shares in their loss."

Arlington Ladies volunteer for the service for many reasons — patriotism, honor and selfless service among them. Some of the ladies have felt part of the Army for the many years their husbands served and some served themselves. Those ladies want to continue that service to the Army for as long as they can.

Benson said she participates so she can continue to serve Soldiers, even 60 years after her own service at the end of World War II.

"I don't know how to say it really," she said. "I guess because I identify with Soldiers. That was my life for 31 years. So it just seems like the natural thing to do."

The Arlington Ladies serve, they say, because it is an honor for them to let families know the Army has not forgotten the service their loved one gave to the United States. And their service, like that of the Soldiers they honor, is representative of the Army's value of selfless service. **sm**

On Point
The Army in Action



Soldiers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team
fire a Javelin missile during recent pre-deployment
training in Germany. The Javelin is a medium anti-tank
system that first entered Army service in 1996.
— Gary L. Kieffer





Sioux Receives Medal of Honor

IN a March 3 White House ceremony President George W. Bush awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously to Master Sgt. Woodrow Wilson Keeble for his actions during the Korean War. Keeble, the first full-blooded Sioux Indian to receive the medal, died in 1982, and the presentation was made to his stepson, Russell Hawkins.

Keeble first saw combat during the World War II invasion of Guadalcanal, and went on to see action during the Korean War. It was in the final allied offensive of that conflict that Keeble risked his life to save his fellow Soldiers.

While serving with the 19th Infantry Regiment of the 24th Inf. Division in the vicinity of North Korea's Kumsong River on or about Oct. 15, 1951, Keeble voluntarily took on the responsibility of leading not only his platoon, but two others as well.

"All the officers of the company had received disabling wounds or were killed in action, except one platoon leader who assumed command of the company," 1st Sgt. Kosumo Sagami noted in an official statement. The company's mission was to take control of a steep, rocky, heavily fortified hill.

Sagami wrote that Keeble led all three platoons in successive assaults upon the Chinese who held the hill throughout the day. All three charges were repulsed, and the company suffered heavy casualties. Trenches filled with enemy soldiers, and fortified by three pillboxes containing machine guns and additional men, dotted the hill.

Following the third assault and subsequent mortar and artillery support, the enemy sustained casualties among its ranks in the trenches. The machine gunners in the pillboxes however, continued to direct fire on the company. Sagami said after Keeble withdrew the 3rd platoon, he decided to attempt a solo assault.

"He once told a relative that in the fourth attempt, he was either going to take them out or die trying," Hawkins said.

Armed with grenades and his Browning Automatic Rifle, Keeble crawled to an area 50 yards from the ridgeline, flanked the left pillbox and used grenades and rifle fire to eliminate it, Sagami said. After returning to the point where 1st Platoon held the company's first line of defense, Keeble worked his way to the opposite side of the ridgeline and took out the right pillbox with grenades.

"Then without hesitation, he lobbed a grenade into the back entrance of the middle pillbox and with additional rifle fire eliminated it," Sagami wrote.

Hawkins said one eyewitness told him the enemy directed its entire arsenal at Keeble during his assault. Even under heavy enemy fire, Keeble was able to complete his objective. Only after he killed the machine gunners did Keeble order his men to advance and secure the hill.

"If he was alive today, I would tell him there's no one I respect more, and how he is everything a man should be — brave, kind and generous," Hawkins said. "I would tell him how proud I am of him, and how I never realized that all this time, I was living with such greatness."

— By Carrie McLeroy

Prime Power School Seeks Soldiers

THE U.S. Army Prime Power Production Specialist School at Fort Belvoir, Va., is looking for specialists, corporals and sergeants who want to earn MOS 21P.

The school teaches skills associated with installing, operating, and maintaining the Army's electrical power plants. The training lasts one year and is among the Army's most technically challenging, according to school officials.

The benefits include earned college credit, promotion opportunities, and worldwide travel while conducting prime-power missions.

Applicants are required to be high school graduates or have a General Education Development equivalency diploma. They must also have a standard GT aptitude score of at least 110, and 107 in EL and ST, and they must earn a score of at least 70 percent on the Basic Mathematics and Science Proficiency Test.

The report date for the next course is April 28 and the one after that is Aug. 25.

For additional information concerning prerequisites/application procedures for the 21P MOS, Soldiers can call DSN 656-3904/3748 or (703) 806-3904/3748 or visit primepower-school.belvoir.army.mil.



Future Combat Vehicles to be Hybrid Electric

THE firing platform for the Mounted Combat System 120mm cannon, one of eight new Manned Ground Vehicle types in the Army's Future Combat Systems program, will roll off the production line this year with a hybrid-electric powerplant.

"The first cannon that rolls out, and every Manned Ground Vehicle, is going to be hybrid electric," said FCS Program Manager Maj. Gen. Charles Cartwright during the recent Association of the U.S. Army's Institute of Land Warfare Winter Symposium and Exposition in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

The other seven FCS MGVs are the command and control vehicle; the reconnaissance and surveillance vehicle; the infantry-carrier vehicle; the non-line-of-sight cannon, or NLOS-C; the non-line-of-sight mortar, or NLOS-M; the medical vehicle-evacuation and medical vehicle-treatment; and the recovery and maintenance vehicle.

All eight MGV types will be powered by electric motors. The electric motors, in turn, will be powered by batteries, which are charged by diesel motors and generators. As

technology matures, the engine will rely solely on fuel cells for power, Cartwright said.

"The engine's on the side," he added. "So we start out fully hybrid electric. Then one day, when they say fuel cells are ready, we pull out the engine and put in the fuel cell capability to produce the energy to power the battery that now propels the vehicle."

— By C. Todd Lopez



First Sergeant Course Changes Curriculum

STUDENTS attending Phase II of the First Sergeant Course, whether in residence or through video tele-training, are quickly realizing that the course is not like the one described by former students.

Gone are many of the written examinations and classroom instruction led mainly by course instructors. In their place is a more student-led, lessons-

learned, participatory form of instruction that is focused on being relevant in today's operational environment. What's more — if Soldiers are attending in residence at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas,

their time spent away from home station just shrunk by six days. "For the longest time, the First Sergeant Course was pretty much predicated on exams," said Sgt. Maj. Ramzy Noel, a senior instructor. Now, he said, students discuss "some of the most relevant things that are happening on the battlefield."

To reduce temporary duty time for residence attendees from 21 days to 15 days, the program of instruction has been changed from a five-day training

week to a six-day training week with extended hours.

"We start as early as 7 a.m., depending on the instruction for the day, and end around 7 p.m.," said Master Sgt. Jerry Bailey, another instructor.

Changes to the curriculum include the removal of instruction on training meetings, training execution and training assessments, and the addition of instruction on things like riot control, improvised explosive device defeat, casualty evacuation, grade registration and improved logistics. Changes were also made to the formal briefings given by the students and the addition of an end-of-course sustainment exercise.

Course materials for both the residence and VTT programs are now the same. The only remaining difference in the courses is that the VTT course is still three weeks long, due mainly to time differences between Fort Bliss and many VTT sites, and requiring remote sites to bring students in for Saturday instruction would take them unnecessarily away from their families on the weekend.

— By David Crozier, NCO Journal

THE Eye IN THE Sky

Story by Pfc. Monica K. Smith

Operated by the Army and other services in-theater, the RQ-7 Shadow is a small but powerful reconnaissance tool.



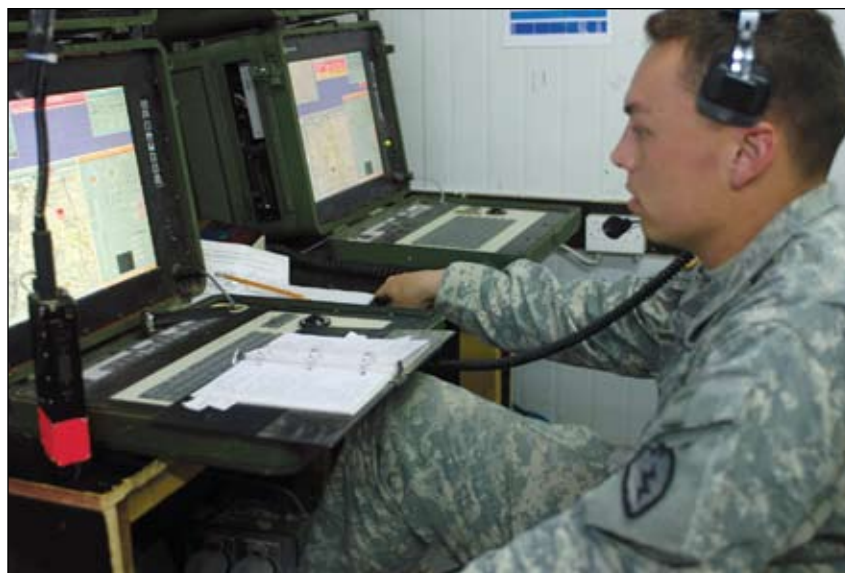
The Shadow is launched by a type of pressurized slingshot, which can be moved as needed. The aircraft is capable of reaching altitudes up to 15,000 feet.

HIGH above the Iraqi landscape flies the “eye in the sky,” taking detailed photos of activities below.

Gazing down from high altitude, the RQ-7 Shadow unmanned aircraft watches the movements of convoys, “sees” improvised explosive devices being planted and “notifies” ground troops of activities in their areas of operations.

“The Shadow provides reconnaissance and target acquisition, and can spot convoys,” said Sgt. Justin

Pfc. Monica K. Smith is assigned to the 3rd CAB, 3rd Inf. Div.



While the Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Kalsu are responsible for the Shadow's takeoffs and landings, other units within the area of operations take control seconds after takeoff.

Having been in flight for several hours, a Shadow UAV lands at FOB Kalsu.



Bramlett, a crew chief assigned to the 25th Infantry Division's 4th Brigade Combat Team.

If troops face resistance, the Shadow is able to relay information such as grid coordinates on enemy locations, Bramlett said.

Since the Shadow is unmanned, it provides scouting options without endangering a pilot or its crew. "If it crashes, nobody is hurt or killed," Bramlett said.

The Shadow is launched by a type of pressurized slingshot, he said. It then uses its engine for powered flight.

The Shadow is able to fly at 15,000 feet, but usually flies between 5,000 and 8,000 feet, out of range of enemy fire, yet close enough to gather information to send to troops on the ground.

While the Soldiers at forward operating base Kalsu are responsible for the Shadow's takeoffs and landings, other units within the area of operations take control seconds after the aircraft takes off.

To take care of the costly aircraft, the unmanned aerial system company of the 3rd Infantry Division's 1st Bat-

talion, 3rd Aviation Regiment, combined UAS units from the division's 2nd and 3rd Brigade Combat Teams, the 3rd BCT of the 101st Airborne Div., and the 25th Inf. Div's 4th BCT to create four platoons that operate out of FOB Kalsu.

"The BCT's have been happy with the support of the consolidated company. We have more flights with more flight time, which provides more UAS coverage in support of ground brigades," said Chief Warrant Officer Dustin Powers, UAS operations officer with the 1st Bn., 3rd Avn. Regt. **sm**

The works judged during the 2007 Army Arts and Crafts Contest included included sculptures, paintings, ceramics, glass, jewelry, fibers and prints.





Arts, Crafts & Soldiers

Story and Photos by Tim Hipps

MORE than 200 Soldiers, civilians and family members generated 530 entries in the 2007 Army Arts and Crafts Contest, sponsored by the Family, Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command.

Soldiers in Iraq and Kuwait and MWR patrons from 39 garrisons around the world participated in the annual, juried competition of two- and three-dimensional artwork.

Entries included ceramics, oil and watercolor paintings, drawings, textiles, glass, metals and jewelry, wood and mixed media. There were separate divisions for novice and accomplished artists, the latter for participants with formal training. All others competed in the novice division. Thirty-two contestants were returning participants and 175 entered for the first time.

First-place winners received \$300, runners-up \$200, and third-place finishers \$100. Contestants who received honorable mentions were issued certificates of excellence.

"Ceramics is a great stress reliever," said Myrna Hawkins, whose "African Influence" placed first in the Accomplished Metals and Jewelry category. Her "The Mask" earned runner-up honors in Mixed Media 3-D. "When you put your hand in the clay and start to work, a peace just seems to come

over you. I can't quite explain it, but it's wonderful.

"I really am amazed each time that I win anything, because if someone would have asked me a few years ago if I would be doing what I am right now, I would probably say 'no,'" said Hawkins, a veteran now majoring in fine arts at the University of Mary Harden-Baylor.

Capt. Hee Kim of Fort Stewart, Ga., a hobby origamist since elementary school, won the Novice Mixed Media 3-D category with "Ancient Dragon." Origami is the Japanese art of folding paper into decorative or representational forms, such as animals or flowers.

Kim followed the original design of a piece created by renowned origamist Staoshi Kamiya.

"I folded mostly based on his diagrams," Kim said. "Though I made modifications and airbrushed it to give it a sculpture-like presence."

His wife, professional artist Anni Mirka Kim, placed second in the Accomplished Drawing category with "Spirit and Perseverance," and third in Accomplished Prints with "70 Percent of Grains."

Sgt. 1st Class Melvin Avis' woodwork "Bob Burn" topped the Novice Mixed Media 2-D category and his

"Lil Duckhunter" earned an honorable mention. Now stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C., Avis found time to hone his skills while at Camp Victory, Iraq.

Sgt. Maj. Steve Carter, who taught art classes for Soldiers in a tent in Iraq, placed second in the Novice Metals and Jewelry category with a bronze statue entitled "The Guardian" while serving in the U.S. Army, Europe, chaplain's office in Heidelberg, Germany. Carter, who also makes knives, now works in the Training and Doctrine Command chaplain's office at Fort Monroe, Va.

Terry Flemings has taken classes in etching, wood shop and framing at the arts and crafts facility at Fort Hood, Texas.

"I always find time to do something with art and my artwork because it mellows my mind," said Flemings, whose "Waldo's Porch in the Spring" placed third in Novice Water-Base Painting. "It's only within the last two years that I've begun sharing my work with the public."

Flemings, an administrative assistant at Carl R. Darnell Army Medical Center, wishes she had more free time for her art.

"The more I paint, the more I realize that I truly have a gift," she said. "I could paint all day. Instead of working eight hours a day, teaching aerobics,



and then painting, I want to paint eight hours a day, continue my fitness to maintain my health, and then work – if I need to.

The contest was judged by Pam Eisenmann, a former art teacher and manager of Army arts and crafts programs in Europe, Korea and the United States, and George Goetzke, a former art director and woodworker who works at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

May 25 is the submission deadline for the 2008 Army Arts and Crafts Contest. Authorized MWR patrons, with the exception of employees of the Army Arts and Crafts program, are eligible to enter. All submissions must be the entrant's original work and must be completed within 24 months of the beginning of the contest year.

For more details, write to FWRC, Attn: FMWR-CR (Arts & Crafts), 4700 King Street – 4th floor, Alexandria, VA, 22302-4418, or call Linda Ezernieks at (703) 681-7754. **sm**

2007 Army Arts and Crafts Contest First-Place Winners

Ceramics

Accomplished: Deida Bourne, Fort Shafter, Hawaii, "The Wave"
Novice: Luka Fatuesi, Vicenza, Italy, "Bump on a Log"

Drawing

Accomplished: Anji Johnson, Yongsan, Korea, "Wisdom"
Novice: Spc. Theodis Jones, Fort Polk, La., "Praise Him"

Fibers

Accomplished: Sgt. 1st Class Anne Burnley, Fort Eustis, Va., "Golden Girls"
Novice: Sara Sparrow, Fort Bragg, N.C., Embroidery & Fabric Painting

Glass

Accomplished: Mary Hayes Collins, Fort Belvoir, Va., "Erica"
Novice: Mutsuyo Royster, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, "Hawaiian Flora: Bird of Paradise"

Metals & Jewelry

Accomplished: Myrna Hawkins, Fort Hood, Texas, "African Influence."
Novice: Staff Sgt. Donald Harrelson (Ret.), Camp Walker, Korea, Silver Bracelet, Turquoise.

Mixed Media 2-D

Accomplished: Jeanne Treschuk, Fort Belvoir, Va., "Self Portrait".
Novice: Sgt. 1st Class Melvin Avis, Camp Victory, Iraq, "Bob Burn"

Mixed Media 3-D

Accomplished: James Meekins, Fort Eustis, Va., "Mask and Shield"
Novice: Capt. Hee Kim, Fort Stewart, Ga., "Ancient Dragon"

Oil-base Painting

Accomplished: Sharon Shaw, Fort Dix, N.J., "Early Sunset"
Novice: Staff Sgt. Johnie Williams, Fort Lee, Va., "A Day At Sailing"

Prints

Accomplished: Laurretta Kreider, Vicenza, Italy, "Splash!"
Novice: Merry Thaden, Fort Leavenworth, Kan., "Big Bang"

Water-base Painting

Accomplished: Sgt. Maria Li, Camp Stanley, Korea, "Stream"
Novice: Jiyeon Pereira, Fort Sill, Okla., "Self-Portrait Series Analogous Scheme Gouache"

Wood

Accomplished: Trevor Harding, Camp Zama, Japan, "Lewis Chessmen & Table"
Novice: Donald Madill, Fort Leavenworth, Kan., "Chip-Carved Cross"



WHEN Staff Sgt. Lonnie Tungate of the Vermont National Guard deployed to Kuwait in January 2005, he decided to make the most of his deployment by completing the college education he'd begun 17 years earlier.

That October, more than 7,000 miles from home, Tungate earned an associate degree and became the first member of his family to graduate from college. His company, Task Force Green Mountain, threw him a graduation ceremony in the Kuwaiti desert, with a cap and gown provided by his college.

"The Soldiers we work with, who are continuing their educations while on active duty, are very goal-oriented," said retired Air Force Master Sgt. Jim Slavin, coordinator of military programs at Excelsior College in Albany, N.Y. "By continuing their studies, deployed Soldiers move closer to accomplishing their goals. Online and CD-ROM courses, as well as examinations, can keep Soldiers on-target toward degree completion."

Studying for tests, writing papers, even completing a thesis, adds another set of tasks to the busy and

often-unpredictable circumstances of a deployment, but determination and technology make long-distance education possible.

Sgt. Maj. Aaron General packed his master's thesis with his gear when he deployed to Iraq. He regularly traveled to at least 20 locations, including Najaf and Fallujah.

"Sometimes a battle would start up and it would be two or three days before we could get out," he said.

Wherever he was, General found computers in vacant offices, "morale" labs or Internet cafés. Armed with research, e-mail addresses to overcome firewalls and e-mail support from faculty, he would pull out his thumb drive and work on his thesis on the psychological costs of war, focusing on post-traumatic stress disorder. He earned a master of arts in liberal studies in 2005.

Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Brown said CD-ROM courses made up for limited Internet availability in Iraq. He could read articles and write papers offline, and when the Internet was available he e-mailed professors, submitted assignments and downloaded research to a thumb drive. Brown appreciated his instructors' timely feedback, which kept him focused without face-to-face meetings.

Brown, who received his diploma in Iraq in the summer of 2007, advised new Soldier-students to stay ahead of schedule:

"There were several times when I was overcome by events; if I had not been ahead of schedule during those times, I would not have been able to catch up."

"Our military values higher education for the knowledge and skills Soldiers gain, and for the values education demonstrates: persistence, commitment and the desire for self-improvement," Slavin said.

More than 6,000 active-duty and reserve-component military students are pursuing associates, bachelors and masters degrees with Excelsior College through online or CD-ROM courses. They're also using credits earned at other colleges and universities, as well as those earned through military training and by proving college-level experience through examination. Service members made up almost 40 percent of Excelsior's nearly 5,000-strong class of 2007.

Visit GoArmyEd.com today to find education benefits for active-duty and reserve-component personnel.

Benefits for military spouses, such as reduced tuition and fees or scholarships, are also available from some institutions. **sm**



Susan Dewan is the assistant dean and director of military affairs for Excelsior College.



Planning for Retirement

S**OLDIERS and families approaching** retirement face financial decisions that will have a major impact on their futures. As you tackle these decisions and plan for retirement, remember three things.

♦ First, help is available, in person and online. The Army has a retirement-services program unlike any other military service. At every major Army installation, a full-time retirement services officer supports both retiring and retired Soldiers and families, both active and reserve-component. That support extends to those far from the

installation. No matter where you are, you have an RSO.

You also have online support through the Army G-1's Retirement Services homepage (www.armyg1.army.mil/retire) and your RSO's homepage. The Pre-Retirement section of the G-1 site includes a pre-retirement briefing and a pre-retirement counseling guide. It also includes a list of RSOs at www.armyg1.army.mil/rso/rso.asp.

♦ Second, retirement is a family affair. Since the family served as a unit and will continue as a unit in retirement, it is only logical that the family plan retirement together.

Pre-retirement briefings and orientations are not only for Soldiers. Like

new arrival briefings and orientations, they are designed with families in mind.

♦ Third, it's never too early to start thinking about retirement. As retired Soldiers and families, you'll still be part of the Army, but your lives will be different. Your retired years could far exceed your years of military service. You need to plan for retirement; it's the rest of your life.

Decisions, Decisions

If your Date of Initial Entry into Military Service (DIEMS) is on or after Aug. 1, 1986, your first retirement-related decision will come at your 15th year of service, at least five years before retirement, and could involve

Laura Paul works in the Army Retirement Services Public Affairs Office.

the counter-intuitive move of turning down a bonus.

If someone offered you \$30,000, you might be inclined to take it. When you reach 14.5 years of service, the Army will do just that. Do you want \$30,000 now, a Career Status Bonus — in return for a promise to serve at least five more years and an agreement to receive reduced retired pay, under the REDUX retired pay plan?

Like the contestant on a game show, you'll hear a lot of "voices" urging you to take the money — your daughter's braces, your son's college tuition, maybe even the car you just saw advertised on TV. Before you heed these calls, stop and figure out what \$30,000 now will cost you in reduced retirement benefits.

Take advantage of the resources offered by Department of Defense and the Army. Read more about this program in the **Career Status Bonus/REDUX Soldier Information** section at www.armyg1.army.mil/rso/PreRetirement.asp. Use the links to DOD sites and calculators, which will let you compare the retired pay of someone who turned down the bonus with the retired pay of someone who took it (with the bonus money included in the comparison). Contact your CSB/REDUX counselor (also listed in this pre-retirement section of the Army G-1 site). And, as indicated earlier, discuss this decision with your spouse and family. It's their future too.

Planning for Your Survivors

At retirement, you have another decision to make. Will you forego 6.5 percent of your retired pay (taken out before taxes) to ensure that 55 percent of your monthly retired pay (plus annual cost-of-living adjustments) continues to go to your spouse (and/or child) after your death?

This is your Survivor Benefit Plan election. What happens if you don't take SBP? Your retired pay stops when you die. The Survivor Benefit Plan is the sole means for you to con-

tinue a portion of your military retired pay to your survivors. The decision is a critical one, given its lifetime impact on your family's financial well-being.

Where can you learn more about SBP? You and your spouse can read more online at www.armyg1.army.mil/rso/sbp.asp, which gives detailed information on SBP, its history, your options and its potential value to your beneficiaries.

What would SBP's history show you? It would show that the plan has actually gotten better. Since Congress originally designed SBP to work with Social Security, the benefit had been reduced when the annuitant reached age 62. That reduction is being phased out and will be eliminated completely this month. Also, effective October 2008, a retiree can stop paying for SBP after reaching age 70 and having made 360 payments.

The site helps you see what SBP will bring to your beneficiary, with links to DOD calculators that show what the lifetime value of SBP would be to your spouse and help you figure out how much insurance you would need to buy to equal the SBP annuity. Of course, you can also go to your RSO with any question.

Other Financial Decisions

- Where do you want to live after retirement?

Retiring where you find a job would seem to be the obvious answer; however, there is one less obvious consideration — state taxes. Some states have no income tax, while other states have income tax but do not tax retired pay. You can find the latest information through your RSO or in the online Pre-Retirement Briefing.

- Should you take your leave or sell it?

Of course your personal situation is primary, but contributing factors include your years of service (30 years and two months or fewer), the amount of leave you have and whether you'll need time to find a job. You can find more detailed

information in the online pre-retirement briefing or through your RSO.

- What health-care coverage do you need and what will it cost?

While you've been an active-duty family, you've been covered by TRICARE Prime with no cost and no co-payment. If you want to continue TRICARE Prime coverage in retirement, you'll have to pay an annual enrollment fee and co-payments. The annual enrollment fee for Prime has been \$230 for an individual/\$460 for a family since TRICARE began in 1995. However, the DOD Task Force on the Future of Military Health Care is recommending increasing those fees for "working age" retirees. (Note: Medicare-eligible retirees who enroll in Medicare Part B are covered by the Medicare/TRICARE program TRICARE for Life.) Congress will have the final say on these increases. In 2006, Congress delayed the DOD-proposed fee increases. For the latest information, check www.tricare.mil or www.armyg1.army.mil/rso/docs/currentnews.pdf.

In retirement, TRICARE Prime will not be your only option. Until you're eligible for Medicare, you'll have the options of TRICARE Standard, Extra or Plus. You'll probably also have the option of health-care coverage through your post-retirement employment or through your spouse's job's health-care options.

For more information, go to www.tricare.mil. The "Getting Help" section of that site gives you contact information for your TRICARE service center and beneficiary-counseling assistance coordinator. The site is being reworked so that you'll be able to access your information through a "My Benefits" portal.

- Are there still more questions to consider when getting ready to retire? Certainly.

- Can you find your answers by studying your online resources, consulting your RSO and planning with your family? Absolutely. Be proactive and check out the details! **sm**



Learning the Digital Way

Story by Meggan Kring and Addison Thomas

At the end of the day, when he's completed his duties in the field, PFC James Tollefson tackles a new mission: furthering his education.

Every night he turns on his computer, logs on to Army Knowledge Online and studies Arabic.

"I want to be able to communicate with Iraqi soldiers and civilians to help my platoon be more effective in

gathering intelligence," said Tollefson, who's assigned to an airborne unit at Fort Richardson, Alaska. "By the time my company deploys, I'll have a solid understanding of the language."

Until a few years ago, Tollefson would have had to jump through hoops to learn a foreign language in the Army, with lengthy application processes, inconvenient commutes and other constraints of classroom-based courses. But the Army's traditional approach to training has gone the way of the abacus.

Many Soldiers are finding that Arabic-language courses taken via computer help them better communicate with their Iraqi counterparts.

Today, Soldiers can receive an education online, anywhere in the world, absolutely free.

Training at Your Fingertips

To achieve mission-essential tasks, Soldiers must be equipped with the right information. That need is met through the Distributed Learning System, an Army-funded program that delivers training through computers.

Supported by the Program Executive Office Enterprise Information Systems, DLS ensures mission readiness through programs like Army e-Learning, a cost-free, Web-based application supported by Skillssoft PLC, an organization that provides innovative commercial-off-the-shelf learning products and services.

Meggan Kring is a marketing communications analyst for the Army Distributed Learning System. Addison Thomas writes for CorpComm, Inc.

Since its launch in 1999, Army e-Learning has given users the training tools they need to advance their careers. Originally designed to assist only the acquisition workforce, the program has grown to meet the Army's demand for more versatile Soldiers. According to Army e-Learning project officer Stan Davis, DLS's digital service has emerged as the blueprint for Army training.

"Army e-Learning started off with only 800 courses. Today, we offer more than 2,600 courses on numerous topics. That's the perfect testament to how successful the program has become," said Davis. "Whether you're preparing for the civilian world or simply want to do your job better, Army e-Learning provides the tools you need at absolutely no cost."

Army e-Learning's courses are available for the entire Army workforce, including active-duty and Reserve Soldiers, Army civilians and cadets. From classes on leadership and business to foreign language and information technology, users can conveniently earn promotion points, credits toward college degrees, and retirement, at the same time they fulfill mandatory training requirements.

And they can learn when and where they want to.

Available 24 hours a day, Army e-Learning is universally accessible through the Army Knowledge Online portal.

SFC Jason Borgeson of the 1st Cavalry Division is one of the most recent enrollees.

"Given my current duty position, and the fact that I have two kids, a wife and in-laws who live about 10 minutes away, I'm very busy when I'm not at work," said Borgeson. "I can complete Army e-Learning courses at my own pace. Even when I have as little as 20 minutes to myself, I can fire up the computer and learn something."

For students who don't own or have access to a personal computer, connecting to Army e-Learning can be done through DLS digital-training stations that support on-duty training. Since 1999, 232 of these sites have been in-

stalled at 94 installations worldwide.

Rosetta Stone

In November 2005 DLS paired with Fairfield Language Technologies — the maker of Rosetta Stone language-learning software — to implement a comprehensive foreign-language curriculum.

Rosetta Stone teaches students how to speak, read and write in 30 languages.

According to Linda Trude, Fairfield Language Technology's vice president of institutional sales, Rosetta Stone is an ideal component to meet the needs of students at the beginner and intermediate levels.

"Our language-learning software is comprehensive enough to serve as a primary language-learning tool and flexible enough to complement other training methods," said Trude.

Rosetta Stone teaches foreign language through a complete immersion process, whereby students learn by associating words and phrases that are commonly used.

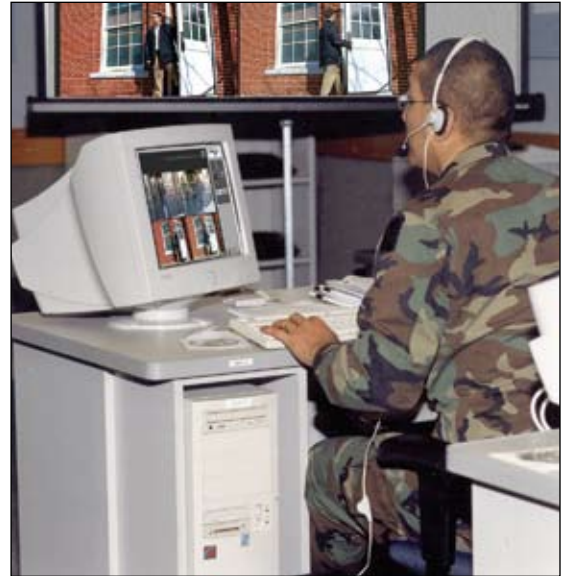
For Soldiers like Tollefson, the language program is priceless.

"I spent a year unsuccessfully trying to teach myself Arabic through other methods," he said. "Rosetta Stone provided me with the instruction and guidance I needed to learn the language."

Like his peers, Tollefson is training and saving at the same time. Without Army e-Learning, the Arabic courses would have cost him roughly \$400 to complete. The Army anticipates the program will save all users money and time, while significantly increasing foreign-language skills across the force.

Commercial Courses

As an Army civilian based in Darmstadt, Germany, former signal-support specialist Jason Hinkley has had plenty



A Soldier uses Rosetta Stone to sharpen his language skills. Thirty languages are available for study.

of experience with computer programs. Before he became a systems administrator, he was asked to take an on-site security course. One of the prerequisites involved obtaining a Certified Information Systems Security Professionals certification. Doing so was both expensive and time-consuming.

Hinkley heard about Army e-Learning and decided to enroll.

"The CISSP course offered by Army e-Learning gave me a good background to understand my courses," said Hinkley. "Plus, it was online. I was able to complete it in about 25 hours during free time at work."

Like those before him, Hinkley was able to advance in his field, thanks to Army e-Learning's A-to-Z approach to training. Whether it's a course on Arabic, leadership or the fundamentals of business, Army e-Learning affords all users plenty of advantages, including the ability to train on and off the battlefield.

For more information about Army e-Learning, or to access courses, visit www.us.army.mil. Once online, click on the "Self Service" tab, select "My Education" and then click on "Army e-Learning." First-time users will be asked to register. Upon completion, you can start your training in 30 languages and 2,600 courses. **sm**

Sniffing Out Explosives

Story and Photos by Spc. Ben Hutto



Gabe, an off-leash search dog, sniffs out some hidden C4 explosives during a training exercise at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq.

THE German Shepherd trots from rock to rock, ears pricked upward and nose pointed towards the earth, intent on his mission.

Several feet away, his handler, Sgt. Richard Miller, a military policeman with the 3rd Infantry Division's 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, silently watches as the dog gets closer to the C4 explosive hidden under some rubble.

The specialized off-leash search dog looks back at his handler and sits down beside the hidden explosive.

"Good boy," Miller says, walking toward Gabriel. "Good job, Gabe."

The dog's tail swings back and forth as his trainer approaches. His mission accomplished, the dog eagerly awaits his reward.

Miller focuses the dog on the explosive while he reaches into his pocket and pulls out a worn-out orange training toy called a cong. He tosses it in front of the dog and watches as he snatches it up and runs back to his handler.

"That's the whole reason the dog does what he does," said Sgt. Timothy Kinsey, another MP with 3rd HBCT.

Spc. Ben Hutto is assigned to the 3rd HBCT Public Affairs Office.

“Sometimes things can be buried too deep or might have been moved, but the dogs are very accurate if something is there.”

“Gabriel is very focused on his reward. He’ll do anything for those congs.”

The 3rd HBCT has three working dogs and they’ve been extremely busy since their arrival at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq.

“They are doing a good job,” said Sgt. 1st Class Tommy Jamison, the 3rd HBCT’s provost sergeant. “They’ve been great assets, but the battalions had to learn how to use the dogs on combat missions.

“They were skeptical at first,” he said. “The Soldiers had to change their techniques, tactics and procedures to accommodate the dogs, and that caused some friction. It was hard to explain to leaders that the dogs needed air-conditioned vehicles and tents to rest in, but once they saw the benefits, everyone accommodated them.”

“Some Soldiers have a hard time understanding that the dogs have the mentality of a four year old,” Kinsey said. “When dogs are tired, they’re tired. I can’t tell them to suck it up and drive on. They love what they do, but they have limits.”

The dogs’ sense of smell makes them perfect for detecting hidden contraband that Soldiers might overlook. Miller said a dog can register and discern 10,000 - 40,000 scents at one time.

“The best way I can explain it is that if you were to walk into a fast-food place you’d smell the meat cooking on the grill and the mop bucket they are using to clean up a spill,” Miller said. “A dog will smell the fat in the burger charring, the meat cooking, the sesame seeds on the buns, the pickle juice, the type of perfume the cashier is wearing and a thousand other scents, all at the same time.”

That ability allows dogs like Gabriel to smell a coil of detonation cord under



Gabe’s handler, Sgt. Richard Miller, gives the dog some last-minute guidance before sending him out on another area search.

a pile of rubble from 10 feet away.

“It takes a lot of luck and good information for the dogs to be effective,” Miller said. “Sometimes things can be buried too deep or might have been moved, but the dogs are very accurate if something is there.”

The accuracy of the dog’s ability can be directly attributed to the daily training the handlers give them.

“Every day is a training day,” Miller said. “We conduct training as often as possible. It keeps the dogs sharp and helps us maintain our rapport with them.”

That rapport is critical out in the field.

“The main thing between a trainer and a dog is their rapport,” Kinsey said.

“We have to notice the dog’s behavior and make decisions based on that. A dog’s normal temperature is between 101 and 103 degrees. If its body temperature gets up to 106, the dog starts shutting down and begins to die. Out here in the desert, that is a big risk we have to monitor.”

Miller throws Gabriel’s cong around a few more times, before calling an end to the training session. The handler roughly shakes the dog and encourages him.

“Normally, specialized off-leash search dogs stay with the same handlers their entire military careers, so we should be together a while,” Miller said. **sm**



OLD, YOUNG WARRIORS MEET FOR THE LAST TIME

A Soldier may hang up his uniform for the last time, but some military sentiments he keeps forever — such as his sense of duty and devotion toward fellow service members.

Take, for example, the man who calls himself the “Old Warrior.” Murray Moorhatch was a World War II paratrooper who took part in the Normandy

invasion and the Battle of the Bulge, and he recently helped say farewell to younger comrade killed in Iraq.

Pfc. Nicholas Greer of the 82nd Airborne Division died during a patrol, and when Moorhatch read a newspaper account of the young man’s death he felt the need to pay his respects. Four days later, clothed in his dress blue uniform, the Old Warrior was walking up the steps of the church where the young Soldier’s funeral was to be held.

As he approached the church, Moorhatch felt a deep pride at the sight of the 82nd Abn. Div. Soldiers who had gathered to say farewell. Inside, when he knelt down by the casket to pay his last respects, he marveled at the similarities between himself and the young man before him. They had both volunteered to serve their country when needed. Both had become Soldiers at the same age. And each had called upon all the strength and spirit he could muster to earn parachutist wings.

As the Old Warrior leaned down he whispered, “airborne!” The tears began and would not stop when he felt sure he heard Greer reply, “all the way!”

Before the formal service began, Greer’s mother was escorted to a pew in the front and a column of officers from the 82nd Abn. Div. passed by. The minister and a chaplain made their remarks, and then a Navy chief petty officer who Moorhatch guessed must have been Greer’s father or some other relative, also spoke. At the end of the service, two Soldiers draped an American flag over Greer’s casket with great ceremony and precision. Everyone rose as pallbearers bore the young paratrooper down the aisle.

The Old Warrior put on his hat and saluted as Greer passed by him. “It was the appropriate thing to do,” he said.

As Moorhatch moved toward the exit the Sailor who’d spoken shook his hand and thanked him for coming. Soon the Old Warrior was being introduced to all the officers present, and when he was asked why he’d chosen to attend the solemn ceremony, he said simply, “I’m an Old Warrior paying my respects to a Young Warrior.”

Following his explanation, Moorhatch was presented with an 82nd Abn. Div. coin. Enthralled with the gift that featured jump wings with a star in a circle and an emblem joining all the engagements the 82nd had ever fought in on the back, the Old Warrior knew it was a keepsake he would treasure forever. **sm**

Renita Foster works in the public affairs office at Fort Monmouth, N.J.

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